

## PEOPLE FROM THE BALKANS IN THE NEW WORLD – BEFORE AND NOW

**KEY QUESTION:** What does the life of an emigrant take away from people and what does it give them?

### Doc. 1. A. People from the Balkans in the New World

We noticed that different sorts of people kept coming, drinking and going away, but one of them remained standing at the buffet and kept sipping at his drink and listening to our conversation. At a certain moment a girl came to ask him to do something. He mumbled something in English and then added: „Idi si, boga ti!“ („Go away, for Lord’s sake!“) He dropped these words on purpose, like bait and we took the bait straight away.

„Are you a Serb?“ asked the doctor.

„Yes, I am. Are you Serbs, too?“ he was curious to find out, apparently extremely glad at the perspective.

“We are Bulgarians.”

“It’s all the same whether you are a Serb or a Bulgarian – we are all Slavs, we are all brothers.”

Without waiting to be invited he came to us and sat at our table, giving out his visiting card. It turned out he was a Serb from Banat, Nedelkovich was his name; after wandering around Europe for a long time, he had finally come to New York 14 years ago; he was a furrier; and he was married to a German woman. He was grinning from ear to ear with having met “bracha”<sup>\*</sup> and simply did not know how to express his feeling of gladness. At first, he started buying us drinks. He told us the short version of his life story: he could recall some past episodes, especially ones from his childhood days. He had not spoken Serbian for 14 years and it seemed that now he was trying to make up for all this time. He spoke without an interruption. He constantly asked us if he was speaking correctly, he kept checking if he had forgotten his mother tongue. A host of impressions, which had been buried under new ones, were now buzzing through his lips. He could remember some old habits, rituals, weddings; he started checking if he could still say his prayers in Slavonic, finally, he started singing „Christ rose from the dead“ to the utter amazement of all Americans present in the pub.

*\* his brother*

### B. The „old“ and the „new“ motherland

Both Nedelkovich and the Bavarian [the host of the pub – our note] are already American citizens. They have been cut off from their native land and you can see that they are proud to call themselves Americans. They look on their ex-motherlands as on something distant, which is now far way in the mist of the past. They feel the interests of the state and of New York City as their own interests. They always read newspapers and are well-informed of the American affairs without forgetting European ones too. I was convinced that Bai<sup>\*</sup> Nedelkovich was not unfamiliar with what was happening in our god-forsaken part of the world. When he boasted with the victory over the Republicans (being a Democrat himself) and with electing Cleveland as President, I asked him what his opinion of the latter was. He, very frankly, told me that „Cleveland is a good man, but he isn’t the state leader type of man, he is a fool; would you like us to give you Cleveland in exchange for your Stambolov so that he may come here and take all the Americans by the hand?...“ Thanks for the compliment...

*\* Bai is an address used in Bulgarian to turn to an older man, usually indicating respect*

Konstantinov, A. To Chocago and back, 1894

#### Task 1:

Work in two groups.

A) Group A, read Doc. 1 (A).

Reconstruct the atmosphere of the meeting between the Bulgarians and the Serb in New York.

Formulate your own hypotheses why the participants in the conversation do not start the otherwise traditional Serbian-Bulgarian disagreements.

Provide arguments to support your view.

Draw a conclusion what Bai Nedelkovich's identity is.

B) Group B, read Doc. 1 (B).

List the similarities between the Serb and the Bavarian in New York.

Formulate a hypothesis why the Serb voices a preference for the Bulgarian statesman. Provide arguments to support your view.

Draw a conclusion what Bai Nedelkovich's identity is.

C) Present the results of your work in front of your classmates from the other group. Determine which elements stand for Bai Nedelkovich's „Serbian“ and which – for his „American“ identity.

Discuss if he is more a Serb or an American. Express your view if such double identity can be long-lived and provide arguments to support your view.

### Doc. 2. Bulgarian emigrants support their native country

In 2004, funds amounting to 1,516 billion leva were transferred to Bulgaria. All this money was provided by Bulgarian emigrants abroad.

The contribution of our compatriots outside the borders of Bulgaria comes up to 4% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the country. It is also 379 million leva or 1/3 more than it was in 2003. To make a comparison, the money transferred to the country by emigrants in 1999, came up to just 2% of the GDP.

The latter was made clear during a large-scale review of migration processes carried out by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which is now uploaded on the organisation's website [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org) [...]

Tanya Petrova, *SEGA* newspaper, 13. 06, 2006.

### Task 2:

A) Give some likely reasons why Bulgarian citizens left the country at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

B) Make a guess why the amount of money sent by Bulgarian emigrants has grown bigger.

### Doc. 3. ....

On January 5th 2007, the prestigious American *Forbes* magazine awarded a prize to the Bulgarian-American company *Bulgar USA*, choosing it amongst 70 nominees. In fact, this act represents the first big acknowledgement to be received by the Bulgarian business in the USA. The company was founded by the Bulgarian Georgi Hadjipopov and his wife the American Donna Hadjipopov. [...]



Dona and Georgi Hadji

Georgi Hadjipopov managed to run away from the communist government in Bulgaria when he was still 17 and was subsequently declared an „enemy of the people“. However, the entrepreneurial spirit which this „enemy of the people“ possessed helped him to cope with the hardships of an immigrant’s life and to create a company which imports aromatic raw materials and more precisely, Bulgarian rose oil. The company’s headquarters are in the fishermen’s hamlet of Montauk, near New York. He has created the cosmetic series „Bulgar“ based on the same original Bulgarian raw materials.

In 1997, Donna Woldin, who had previously been an important official at the New York Mayor’s Office, tracked down Georgi attracted by one of the company’s advertisements and went to meet him... and they have now been together for nine years. In January 2000, Georgi Hadjipopov took his wife to Bansko to introduce her to his family and to show her the mountain – Pirin. Donna was extremely touched with the exceptional hospitality and kindness of the people there regardless of the economic crisis. She fell in love with the products of Bulgarian craftsmen, with the hand-dyed earthenware, with the hand-woven textiles.

Georgi, on his part, manages to fill a 12-meter container up with „treasures from a hidden culture“ (this is how their website presents the range of the products of Bulgarian crafts and Bulgarian souvenirs today). The company made a break-through at the International Exhibition of the Souvenir and Gift Industry in New York in 2001. Buyers from various countries came to visit Donna and Georgi’s stall. Since that event on their hand-decorated Bulgarian souvenirs make the shelves at various museums, art galleries and gift shops pretty, they decorate even those of the big wine company at Napa Valley.

In 2002, the Hadjipopovs bought the Bulgarian company producing children’s toys „Children’s World“ which used to give work to 200 workers. The activity of the company has now grown considerably. It has its representatives in Chicago, in Dallas and Missouri and reaches the northeastern and Atlantic states by travelling salesmen.

Information by the Agency on Bulgarians Abroad, 27. 02. 2007

### Task 2:

- A) Give a title to the text.
- B) Using the text, make a chronology of Georgi Hadjipopov’s life.
- C) List the reasons which made him leave his home country.
- D) In the text, find evidence of what his identity is.

### Doc. 4. ....

As announced in the *Duma* newspaper, the construction of a common memorial to the victims of political fights before and after September 9th, 1944, has been started in the village of Vinishte, Montana district. The memorial is in the shape of an 11-meter-tall clock tower with four clocks on top and bears the names of about 80 people who lost their lives in the wars for Bulgaria, in the political struggles before September 9th, 1944 on both sides of the barricades, or who were killed with no trial or sentence after September 9th, 1944, people who perished in the wars for their country, political prisoners, people sent to concentration camps, internees, political émigrés, from before and after this date. All of them were from the village of Vinishte. The main idea is for the memorial to lead to reconciliation and the main hope is for the descendants to be able to get over the wounds from the long-lasting enmities.

The idea to inscribe the names on the stone as well as the money for the erection of the monument belong to Kiril Marinov, a political émigré to Germany who left the country 57 years ago after being persecuted as a member of Nikola Petkov’s\* party.

He is also the main sponsor of Zahari Stanchev’s book – „Vinishte – facts and legends about the history of the village and about the life of its inhabitants“ published not long ago by Logos-91 and listing the names of all victims from Vinishte. Marinov later decided to take them from the book to the stone in order to keep future generations’ memory fresh.

\* *Nikola Dimitrov Petkov* (July 8, 1893 - September 23, 1947) was a Bulgarian politician, one of the leaders of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (usually abbreviated as BZNS). He entered politics in the early 1930s. Petkov was tried and executed soon after postwar Soviet control was established in the country.

He is supported by his „third-age” fellow-villagers of various political orientation – they used to be his political opponents in the past. This happened because they all consider themselves, the people who made the history of the place, responsible for setting an example to the young generations.

Information by the Agency on Bulgarians Abroad, 21. 03. 2007

#### Task 4:

- A) Read the information from **Doc. 4**. Give a title to the text.
- B) Call to mind what you have studied about the political struggles before and after September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944. Guess what their influence on the life in the village of Vinishte has been.
- C) Suggest some ways which may possibly lead to overcoming the consequences of this political division.
- D) Express your attitude towards the initiatives taken by the émigré Kiril Marinov.

On the basis of **Doc. 3** and **4**, discuss why the „heroes“ act tolerantly, overcoming their feelings of insult. Draw a conclusion regarding the way that takes them back to their motherland. Compare the significance of the actions taken by Georgi Hadjipopov and by Kiril Marinov.

**SUMMARY QUESTION:** How does life abroad change a person’s attitude towards others, towards one’s motherland and towards the political past?